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ABSTRACT

Questions centered on the issue of how young children and others deal with gender and questions focusing on gender development and developmental theory are posed. Numerous research findings bearing on the questions are reviewed. General topics addressed are the following: (1) classificatory discrimination of sex by physical cues, (2) gender constancy, (3) the role of language in gender acquisition and sex-role socialization, (4) the acquisition of sex-role behavior, (5) exceptions in gender acquisition, particularly with reference to research concerning effeminate boys, (6) egalitarian sex-role attitudes in adolescents, and (7) the relationship of the findings reviewed to cognitive developmental theory. Several ideas advanced by Kohlberg that are seen to be related to gender development are discussed. In conclusion, areas for further research are pointed out. (Author/RH)

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Gender Concepts, Sex Role Deviancy, and Cognitive Development

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Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Boston, April 2-5, 1981

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Gender Concepts, Sex-Role Deviancy, and Cognitive Development

Spencer K. Thompson

As a graduate student in 1969 while trying to decide what to research for the rest of my life, I sought a research area in which the topic was interesting, measureable, significant in real life, and developmentally important. I naively chose to study sex role development mainly because it fit the aforementioned criteria. (It was probably more a function of my youthful preoccupations on sex.) Little did I realize, in my naivete, the complexities involved or the societal changes that would occur concerning this real life topic. Since then, my studies have been mostly descriptive and have followed questions I thought were interesting. The studies then, are not necessarily derived from prevailing theories but do have theoretical relevance concerning the acquisition and function of gender. I have covered different aspects of gender roles including sex differences, language development, deviancy, gender differentiation, and gender role attitudes. So far life span interests have led me from newborns up to young adults.

There are certain questions that repeatedly interested me and it is with trepidation that I discuss these questions considering the prodigious amount of writing and research now being done in sex related socialization. To satisfy my curiosity and to demonstrate the explosion of research in these areas I compared the number of articles abstracted by Psychology Abstracts on Sex Roles, Sex Differences, and Feminism in 1969 when I started, with the number of articles on these subjects in 1980. Articles on sex roles increased from 102 in 1969 to 637 in 1980; sex difference articles increased from 368 to 1972; feminism articles increased from 0 to 32. Not all of these articles dealt with children, of course, but they do demonstrate that today's symposium is discussing a very

important topic and that great changes in research trends have occurred. I welcome these changes because in my early explorations of the literature I found that many elementary questions about the gender process were not explored.

The particular questions that have puzzled me and directed my research center on the basic question of how humans, young children in particular, deal with gender. Gender refers to the socially acquired labels, attributes, and roles that are usually, although not necessarily, concommitant with the biological sex of a specific person. Ideally, gender should be used to designate social connotations instead of biological. Admittedly, this definition is not universally accepted in the literature (Maccoby, 1980). I find it difficult to be consistent and have often used sex and gender interchangeably. For this paper, considering the title of the symposium, "gender" will be the preferred term.

In dealing with gender, what are the developmental trends? What happens if a child deviates from the norms, for example, effeminate boys? Further questions constantly occurring concern sex differences. Are there any? When do they appear? How do they appear or disappear? In addition, all of the above questions must be given theoretical considerations. Which theories, assumed or expressed, guide research and explain the results most adequately? Most recently I have been concerned with the life span and social implications of changes in the roles of the sexes. Is society changing? How is it affecting youth? Obviously with so many questions floating around in my head, it will be impossible in this presentation to dwell at length with any one of them. In my potpourri presentation I will try to bring together some coherent threads from each of the questions as covered by my own findings.

Environmental Bias of Developmental Research in Gender

Most socialization research on gender development has strong emphasis on environmental assumptions. My own bias in this direction was fostered by an attempt to find unequivocal biological determinants of sex differences in children less than three years of age (Thompson, 1973). I found few bonafide behavioral differences. Unlike others (e.g. Garai and Scheinfeld, 1968) my review of the literature did not, for example, convince me that females compared to males are more mature at birth, reach developmental milestones earlier, are less active, cry less, are more dependent, and more sociable. Immediate environmental interaction made attribution of biological causation impossible even with infants. These were contrary to my own expectations. I had been told all my life there were differences between boys and girls. My conclusion, later more eloquently stated by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974), was that young children and older ones too, are much more similar than different. Concentration then, should be on the shared processes for each sex rather than on finding the differences between the sexes.

During the third year of life the socialization process in the environment becomes pronounced. Parents have greater expectations for the child's social behavior, peers are sought out and played with in a reciprocal manner, language is particularly rapid in development, and the child is asserting his/her own individuality. To me this last point about a child developing his/her own individuality is important. With this development of individuality we see the third factor in the biological-environmental-cognitive interaction. In young children the biological characteristics set the stage for the environmental interactions. Within each context, the cognitive interpretations and developmental skills influence individual behavior patterns and attitudes. I would now like to focus on my research as it applies to the various aspects of this complex three way interaction.

Class Discrimination of Sexes by Physical Cues

One of the first steps in the acquisition of gender is the recognition that there are sex categories - male and female. Recent attention has focused on when children can discriminate between sexes, how they discriminate, and what significance these cues have to the child. One observation of parents of children learning language is that children will spontaneously and consistently label pictures in books, magazines, and advertisements picking out the boy, girl, mommy, or daddy (Edwards and Lewis, 1979). Anyway, my children beginning at 18 months were doing so. This labeling process in essential for language development and eventual gender socialization, e.g. imitation of role models. Although voice, size, odors, and strength are appropriate discriminators between men and women, most research including my own has focused on visual cues such as hair, clothing, genitalia, and physique. Results of studies are fairly consistent. Children have an early ability to tell the difference between men and women but may have a bit more difficulty with younger children.

My data (Thompson, 1975) with two, two and a half and three year old, first-borns indicated that recognition of the sexes corresponding to noun labels is acquired by two by many children. I had the children touch projected slide images that were presented in male-female pairs. The children were asked to touch the labeled man, woman, lady, daddy, father, mommy, boy, girl, brother and sister in the different picture pairs. At two years 76% of the responses were correct, at two and a half 83%, and at three 90%. Errors were due more to unfamiliar labels (brother/sister) than discrimination problems. Children, especially boys, were significantly poorer with pronoun labels when I asked them to show me "where he/she is," "touch him/her," and "touch his/her hand" in the paired pictures. At two years 50% of the responses were correct, at two and a half 75%, and at three 95%.

In preparation for another task, I had these same children sort paper dolls, photographs of stereotypically dressed boys and girls, and photographs of themselves into two separate boxes. One box was meant for girls and the other for boys. The children were first clearly capable of sorting the paper dolls and photographs of opposite sexed strangers at two and a half. Although not significantly different, except for the 30 month boys in my sample, the children were somewhat poorer at sorting their own picture into the appropriate sex category. Of course my results were no doubt affected by the visual stimuli I used (the opposite sex pictures were very stereotyped), but it seemed to me there was a progression. First the children recognized the two sex categories then could recognize their own pictures, followed by the ability to categorize their own sex no matter what the visual cue. My sample of 22 subjects at each level was small and the progression I have just described is tentative but in general agreement with others who have studied children as young as 24 months (Lloyd, 1980). I am certain children by 24 months are quite good at discriminating between the sexes based on visual cues. I think they can do it in real life quite well by 24 months based on my experience with my own daughters. My two year old girl is having a problem with self labeling which may be due to a general lack of long hair. However, neither sorting tasks or direct verbal questioning indicates that 24-month-olds can classify themselves according to sex (Gessel, 1940; Rabban, 1950; Thompson, 1973; 1975). Different methodologies must be developed to demonstrate this last point conclusively. Apparently discriminating other's sex is not as difficult as the combined process of differentiating yourself from others, discriminating your own sex, and then classifying yourself with one sex and not the other. I think these processes are well under way by two and a half and nearly complete by three. Furthermore, in my study with 24-, 30-, and 36-month-olds, only at three were the children

able to consistently do preference tasks requiring recognition of their own sex. After that they showed a preference for the same sex label.

Gender Constancy

The fancy of researchers has not been caught by whether or not children discriminate between the sexes but rather how important the various gender cues are in the discrimination process. This is particularly relevant to the question of when "gender conservation" occurs in children. In other words, when do children realize their sex is permanent despite any superficial changes in physical and social characteristics? I first became interested in this when I did a study involving some rather strange dolls. These dolls were the epitome of physical androgeny. A doll could have ear length or shoulder length hair, male or female adult body, and either male or female genitalia (Thompson and Bentler, 1971). Consistent with other studies, (Levin, Balistrieri, and Schukit, 1972; McConaghy, 1979; Nash and Maki, 1978) we found that hair was the most important cue used by children to determine sex. Although many of these 4, 5, and 6 year old children knew these dolls had genitals, the genitals were apparently less important than hair length and even body build. At the same time I asked these 144 preschoolers if they were going to be a mommy or daddy when they grew up. All the children except for one answered they would definitely be the parent of the same sex. Interestingly, an average of 13% of the children said "yes" in response to the question, "Could you be the opposite sexual parent (mommy/daddy)?" Although this question did not show the lack of sex constancy Kohlberg (1966) predicted, these results and the doll study indicated that gender constancy based on sex invariability had not fully occurred by six years of age. Other studies have looked in more detail at gender constancy.

In general there is now consistent evidence that there are steps in the acquisition of gender constancy (DeVries, 1971; Eaton and VonBargen, in press; Emmerich, Golden, Kirsch and Sharabany, 1977; Gouze and Nadelman, 1980; Kuhn, Nash and Brucken, 1978; McConaghy, 1979; Marcus and Overton, 1978; Slaby and Frey, 1975). In order of acquisition these steps include: 1) labeling and discriminating between the sexes and then categorizing oneself accordingly; 2) believing gender is permanent and cannot change; and 3) believing changes in superficial physical and behavioral cues will not change biological sex. There are still unresolved issues within each of these steps, e.g. pseudo constancy (Emmerich, et al, 1977), however, a strong cognitive component is assumed. According to this line of research, true gender constancy does not occur until after 6 years of age. The manner in which these progressive steps are acquired is not known, although the process is parallel to conservation of length, number, volume, etc.

Language and Gender

Language plays a significant role in gender acquisition and role socialization. With this in mind I decided to see how language would be indicative of the development of early gender constancy (Thompson and Thompson, 1978). I am particularly interested in the relative importance of language rules of pronoun gender (Anglin, 1979) and socialization rules of gender. I devised some simple stories which contained controlled combinations of pronouns (neuter and/or masculine, feminine gender) and social cues (masculine, feminine and/or neutral). For example, preschool, kindergarten, and first grade children were read the following story with feminine pronouns and masculine context: "A child was outside one day. She got tired of playing army with her truck. She took her baseball mitt home with her. She wanted to put on her football helmet."

The story with masculine pronouns and feminine context was: "A child got out of bed in the morning. He quickly put on his dress and tied his hair ribbon. He was going to do some sewing today. He didn't have time to take his dolls with him." After hearing each story, the children were asked in different ways to indicate whether the character of the story was male or female. Contrary to our expectations, children tended to rely more on the pronoun gender cues than the social gender cues. This demonstrates that not only do children pay close attention to language cues, but they are showing some degree of constancy despite conflicting social cues. Right now we do not quite know what to do with the data in terms of its gender constancy contradictions. Children of these ages are very aware of sex role expectations and stereotypes and apparently are not as rigid as we thought. It did appear that the feminine context cues (e.g. dress, sewing) were stronger than the masculine context cues (e.g. football helmet, army). This may be support for the assertion that male roles are more rigid than female roles (Baumrind, 1980). Males cannot cross over and wear dresses but girls can have a football helmet.

Acquisition of Sex Role Behavior

Before three years of age, children are very aware of gender stereotyping in roles and activities around them. In most cases children's awareness of stereotypes are accurate reflections of the world around them. They know the typical voices, apparel, and household activities of the mother and father (Thompson, 1973; 1975). Stereotyping of traits tends to increase with age (Best, Williams, Cloud, Davis, Robertson, Edwards, Giles and Fowles, 1977). After they have gained a wider experience in the outside world, they may experience different role models and activities that contradict these stereotypes (Perry and Bussey, 1979), but many times children will maintain a stereotype

they have gained from mass media, peers, or some other socializing influence (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974). I think children are just attempting to maintain category consistencies, but intervention and training can change these stereotypes (Flerx, Fidler and Rogers, 1976).

Preference behavior for one's own gender labels is one of the consistencies that occurs early in life (Helper and Quinlivan, 1973; Liebert, McCall, and Hanratty, 1971; Montemayor, 1974; Stein, Pohly and Mueller, 1971; White, 1978). In my own study with children in their third year, I was not able to demonstrate a preference tendency for same-sex, gender labels until 36 months of age. I offered the children two identical pictures, one labeled as a boy's picture and the second labeled as a girl's picture. At three years, children strongly preferred the picture with the label corresponding to the child's own sex. The 24-month-olds chose 52% of the same-sex labels, the 30-month-olds 57%, and the 36-month-olds 78%. I believe this is a strong factor influencing role behavior and attitudes, independent of parental shaping or observation of counter stereotypic experiences (Cordua, McGraw, and Drabman, 1979). If a child is convinced a behavior is not for his/her own sex he/she will not perform the behavior or will not change a stereotypic attitude (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1976). Through selective attention then, children maintain their own gender constancy. It is possible to change a child's rigidness in gender roles (e.g. Flerx, Fidler and Rogers, 1976), but the cognitive interpretation as well as environmental settings or sources of information must be considered (e.g. Masters, Ford, Arend, Grotevant, and Clark, 1979; Perry and Bussey, 1979; White, 1978). Studies of persistent effeminacy in boys can be used to illustrate the effect of counter-cultural preference behavior.

Exceptions In Gender Acquisition

The processes of gender acquisition do not always flow in the manner I have been describing. The adequacy of current explanations of gender role acquisition can be tested by looking at exceptions. In the last ten years a fair amount of research has been developed concerning effeminate boys. Little research is available on masculine girls. These effeminate boys may or may not have gender disturbance. That is they may know what their own sex is and may not want to change it. In our society of rather rigid expectations for role appropriate behavior in boys, some boys because they seem to act too much like girls are referred to professional services for examination or counseling. I have not been involved in the counseling phase but have participated in attempts to define the characteristics shared by these boys and the behavioral consequences (Bates, Bentler, and Thompson, 1973; 1979; Thompson, Bates, and Bentler, 1977).

We have found that these boys tended to differ in a number of ways from other boys. The effeminate boy's characteristics included, but were not restricted to, performance of stereotypic feminine behavior. As would be expected from the previously mentioned studies on sex cues, these boys had a tendency to cross dress and wear makeshift or real wigs. According to mothers' reports, they also imitated females and were quite good at it in terms of voice inflections, hand movements, walking, etc. Compared to other boys, they engaged in more feminine activities (doll play, house) and interact more with women and girls. Compared to samples of normal and clinical behavior problem boys, the gender problem boys did not have more female friends but had significantly fewer male friends (Bates et al., 1979). Besides cross sex behaviors, the boys also were not very popular or extraverted in their activities. In physical activities they tended to be non-athletic and

uncoordinated. In addition, these extremely effeminate boys were hard to get along with and were characterized by their mothers as being defiant, emotionally volatile, and not easy going. Some of these boys at one time had wished that they were girls.

This above description paints a pretty gloomy picture for those boys who are deviant from the socially accepted gender role. Not all the boys we had in our project were misfits, but by 12 years of age most of these boys were having problems other than effeminacy. In our normal comparison groups, effeminate behaviors were markedly rare in five-year-olds and practically absent at six years of age (Bates, et al., 1973). The persistence of different behaviors by the gender problem boys is therefore quite remarkable. We assume that despite tremendous peer pressure (e.g. Fagot, 1977; Lamb and Roopnarine, 1979) and other social ostracism found in normal social settings, these boys maintained their effeminate characteristics. The boys were not necessarily frail, sickly, and did not have genetic disorders (Rekers, Crandall, Rosen, and Bentler, 1979). Neither did they come from mother dominant homes (Thompson, Bates and Bentler, 1977). We believed their behaviors were strongly influenced in an interactive sense by their initial gender role preferences and later by their inability to behave in the masculine ways that take years of practice, such as, peer interaction, ball throwing, gesturing, and modulating the voice. Therapies that are successful with these boys have focused on teaching interaction skills and gender role behaviors (Bates, Skillbeck, Smith, and Bentler, 1975; Rekers, Rosen, Lovaas, and Bentler, 1978). Ideally, we would like to reduce the rigid gender role expectations of society and enable boys to develop behaviors consistent with their own capabilities and preferences.

Retrospective reports of transexuals and homosexuals often mention an early awareness that they were different or had a strong desire to be like females

(Bentler, Rekers, and Rosen, 1979). This early cognition may be completely independent of most direct environmental shaping. Of course, a certain kind of environment may help foster it and maintain it, e.g. a mother who dresses a boy as a girl, but an equal emphasis can be placed on an individual child's interpretation of his preferences. This could be tested only through longitudinal studies in which, for example, individual differences in early preferences for gender labels and sex typed activities could be followed.

Until longitudinal studies are performed we will not know the true etiology of gender disturbance or even masculinity in boys (Bentler, 1976). I think some of the longitudinal work with language acquisition may be fruitful in producing records of gender acquisition in children. These projects have extensive records of parent-child and child speech productions. Language records could tell us about the frequency and direction of gender labels from the parent, the practicing of labels by the child, and the sequence of gender acquisition for self and others. I have tried teaching my 24 month old, who is still short of hair, that she is a girl without much success. But then, I can't teach her to say her name either and she certainly responds to that already.

Egalitarian Sex Role Attitudes in Adolescents

I have not been involved in research with so called gender problem boys in the last few years. Perhaps arising from my work with such boys, my recent concerns have been directed towards the society that makes adjustment for these boys so difficult. If society were more tolerant and egalitarian, effeminate boys would have far fewer problems. By definition, there would be no such thing as effeminacy problems in a society where rigid gender role expectations were non-existent. Although I am not certain such a totally egalitarian society is attainable or even desirable, it is the general consensus

of many that we are eliminating many of the inconveniences and conveniences of gender roles. It is an affront to individuals when they are denied a job or equal pay because of sex. However, it is a convenience to have assumed roles in household duties (i.e. who cooks, mows the lawn, fixes cars, or baby-sits?) and social courtesies (i.e. opening doors, calling on phone, changing last name upon marriage). I have found changes in these areas of gender roles to be of considerable concern to the public. I have tried to document attitude changes in these areas on the part of adolescents.

In 1976 Patricia Metts and I tested fifth, eighth, and eleventh graders in a relatively well to do, conservative, small city in West Texas (80,000 population). We administered a modified form of a sex role egalitarianism scale developed by Ellis and Bentler (1973). In this questionnaire respondents were presented 37 pairs of statements. One statement in each pair posited a traditional sex role such as: fathers make the major decisions; boys should pay for dates; girls should be given special courtesies; and boys should play with boy's things and girls should play with girl's things. The other statement in the pair made an egalitarian claim such as: men and women should be together in the army; a girl can call a boy on a phone first; a boy should open the door for a girl; and a husband and wife should draw straws to decide whether to take the wife's or husband's job in two different cities. The respondent had to chose either the traditional or the egalitarian response in each pair. Each pair contained the traditional and egalitarian counterpart on the same topics: a. Boys should not wear make-up; b. Boys or girls can wear make-up.

In our initial 1976 study of 379 students (Metts, 1977) we found as expected that female adolescents were more egalitarian than males ($p < .01$, $\bar{X}_{\text{males}} = 18.9$, s.d. = 4.86; $\bar{X}_{\text{females}} = 20.7$, s.d. = 5.54). The maximum egalitarian response possible was 37 points. The sex differences were highly significant but actually

very small in absolute points ($\bar{X}_{diff}$ = 1.8). Very surprising to me was the consistency in responding at all grade levels. The eighth graders were more traditional ($p < .05$) than the fifth and eleventh graders. But in terms of absolute value, fifth graders were responding almost the same as the eighth and eleventh graders ($\bar{X}$ = 19.4, 18.86, 20.52 respectively). We thought that the eleventh graders would see the arbitrariness of many sex role stereotype expectations and would be more egalitarian. This was not the case!

Three years later in 1979 we repeated the testing and found almost identical results. The students present in both our 1976 and 1979 cross-sectional samples did show slight, nonsignificant, movement toward greater flexibility in gender roles, but again the absolute amount was negligible. This indicated to us that first of all gender role attitudes are fairly fixed by fifth grade, and secondly that on the whole these students over a three year period were not reflective of a social trend towards egalitarianism. In some small samples of students for whom we had longitudinal data, the attitudes were generally consistent ($r = .66$); only the eighth to eleventh grade students changed significantly ($p < .01$; $n = 11$). Encouragingly for those concerned with family roles and childrearing, there was strong agreement on the egalitarian responses concerning mother-father decision making, family privileges, and participation in games. The most traditional expectations involved social courtesies such as opening doors for females (see also Renne and Allen, 1976), males paying for dates, and a girl not kissing the boy first.

The questionnaire administered in Texas to adolescents was very similar to the adult form I administered in California (Thompson, 1973). The married couples in Los Angeles had more egalitarian responses. Further research would have to be done to determine whether the adolescents I studied will become more egalitarian as a function of more social experiences, greater education and intellectual

maturity, and a different community. It is our conclusion that effeminate boys will continue to be socially unaccepted for quite a while in such adolescent cultures.

Relation of Studies to Cognitive Developmental Theory

The studies I have been describing were not designed to be the critical studies to prove or disprove any particular theory. However, without a doubt the research topics have direct relevance to cognitive-developmental theory. The cognitive-developmental theory has very persuasive integrative assumptions that are highly appropriate for my language and socialization studies (Baldwin, 1969; Kohlberg, 1969; Nelson, 1973). The theory has helped to know what questions ask.

According to cognitive-developmental theory, the child actively uses models, interpretations, rules, and discriminations to initiate and guide interaction with the environment. The organization and context of these cognitive influences are based upon the principles of learning associated with action, and experience. Information gathered through orienting responses can be integrated into existing cognitive interpretations. If, however, new information is discrepant, this new information may cause disequilibrium leading to changes in cognition and behavior. Systematic changes occur continuously but have stagelike sequencing because of maturation. All developmental systems--cognitive, social and emotional--follow similar patterns of progression. The progressive stages are strongly affected by maturation but are not not independent of environmental influences.

Based upon cognitive-developmental assumptions, Kohlberg has specified several corollaries that directly relate to gender development (Kohlberg, 1966; Kohlberg and Zigler, 1967). I will now discuss some of these assumptions in

relation to the previously described research. Rather than making at this time an extensive presentation of the assumptions as presented by Kohlberg, I have taken the liberty to integrate several points and to be rather selective in my points of emphasis.

1) According to Kohlberg, developmental trends in gender role development and attitudes will be reflections of natural cognitive development. This will be shown in invariant stages corresponding to cognitive rather than physiological or chronological development. As pointed out in my study with gender labels with two to three year old children, there is a definite trend from label recognition/discrimination, to label self application, to label preference. Performance on the various tests in that study all loaded together into a factor associated with receptive language ability and age. Language ability was a somewhat better predictor of gender label performance than age. Most studies have shown IQ to be a better predictor of gender constancy tasks than age (e.g. Gouze and Nadelman, 1980; Kohlberg and Ziegler, 1967).

With regard to egalitarian gender role attitudes in adolescents, I expected a strong trend on our questionnaire toward more flexible roles due to increases in abstracting abilities and higher stages of moral reasoning. There were significant age trends in that direction, but the differences, as mentioned before, were not large. The pre-puberty (fifth-graders) and post-puberty (eleventh-graders) attitudes were just about the same. There was a tendency for self reported grade point averages to be significantly correlated in a positive direction with egalitarianism ($r = .38$, $p < .001$). Students with higher grades tended to be more egalitarian.

2) According to Kohlberg, increased cognitive ability will cause a shift of emphasis from physical, concrete dimensions to more abstract but invariant dimensions. Gender identification and gender role attitudes will initially

focus on the child's perception of observed actions and physical characteristics and will be relatively independent of individual variations in culture and families. Such assumptions limit the direct role of Freudian drives, social reinforcement and imitation.

Without a doubt children focus on physical cues and are quite good at using them to assign sex. I think it is a mistake, however, to think non-constancy in a hypothetical testing situation wherein physical sex cues of a child are changed is the same as non-constancy in the child's own gender in real life. Clinical evidence (e.g. Money and Ehrhardt, 1972) speaks against that. However, physical cues such as cross-dressing and wigs were an important part of effeminate boys' play acting and fantasies. Interestingly, one girl out of 144 children in our doll study did point to the penis on a doll and claim that was why the doll was a girl.

Even the youngest children in my studies were aware of cultural stereotyping in dress and objects associated with gender role activities. In this context, I am puzzled as to why the abstract pronouns were more important than the concrete gender role activities and objects in my language study manipulation. I asked my five year old daughter if her male friend would be a girl if he wore a dress. She said: "No, but he would if he had long hair." I have found stereotyping to be relatively independent of parental factors such as occupation, education, and egalitarian role attitudes. In addition our gender problem boys did not appear to come from homes in which the mothers dominated the fathers (Thompson, Bates and Bentler, 1977).

Imitation is a special consideration in cognitive and social learning approaches and will be covered by Kay Bussey in this symposium. There is strong evidence that imitation is an innate tendency and can be seen in very young children. For example, I have seen newborns imitate someone sticking

out his tongue at the baby (Brazelton, 1980 speech). Because of a distinct lack of preferential imitation of either the mother or the father by our effeminate boys, or the normal boys, I think cognitive factors strongly affect the selection of imitative behavior. Effeminate boys are not merely imitating their mothers (Thompson, et al., 1977).

3) According to Kohlberg, gender role behavior is motivated by a general tendency to become effective and competent and to enhance self esteem. In general, individuals will tend to act consistent with their self concept and equate goodness to that which is similar to themselves. A person's gender identification is determined by what is valued. The value of a reinforcement depends upon the individual's identity or self concept.

The most obvious confirmation of the above is my finding that by three years of age many children are showing a distinct preference for pictures with the same-sex gender labels and also pictures that were labeled "good" as opposed to "bad." This did not occur until after the children were capable of demonstrating awareness of their own sex. I think social experiences do have an enhancing effect on label valuing. When I gave children the chance to listen to verbal labels like "Good Boy" or "Good Girl," there were no strong preferences for either label except in the cases of children who had a large number of playmates. Age and sex of playmates is perhaps more important than the traditionally emphasized parental factors (Thompson, 1973).
From my studies it is impossible to say whether these preferences for same-sex labels are caused by societal shaping or by self concept motivation. In my studies with young children, I looked for same-sex bias in recognition of human photographs, sorting gender-typed pictures of objects, and use of gender labels and found no consistent same-sex bias. I did find evidence for egocentrism in my language study and gender label study. The youngest children tended to

assume that things they liked were appropriate gifts or objects for either sex.

Effeminate boys are very much aware of societal expectations to act appropriately according to sex, but persist in opposite sex behaviors in non-restricted environments or where no disapproving person is present (Rekers, 1975). This may be due to the "negative identity" hypothesized by Erikson (1959). A person with such a self concept deliberately chooses the non-normal behavior, for example effeminate behavior, to be consistent with a negative self concept.

With regard to consistency in attitudes and role behavior, the adolescents we studied were contradictory. Most of the youth agreed that boys and girls should be treated the same. Yet, they also said boys should not be allowed to play with dolls and wear make-up.

Such are the dilemmas facing us in investigating where society should go in gender roles. We would like individuals to acquire strong awareness of their identities in terms of gender. But, on the other hand, acting in a totally masculine or feminine manner should be irrelevant in most situations. Recently when describing the ideal male and female baby, preschooler, and adolescent, one of my classes wanted very egalitarian or androgenous younger children, but wanted their adolescent ideals to be appropriately masculine or feminine. How can a person suddenly become masculine or feminine when they reach puberty? Indeed a person should be capable of behavior appropriate to the situation, e.g. act sensitively when caring for children, and assertive when rights are being infringed. However, learning such behaviors does not preclude gender role distinctions. I think rather rigid gender role distinctions and characterizations will be made by children as a result of cognitive tendencies and the role behaviors currently in society. Society is still more traditional

than many think. However, a child does not have to be the same as an adult. Perhaps, true egalitarianism does not occur until after a strong, rigid self concept in terms of gender identification has been achieved.

Many topical, methodological, and theoretical issues remain. We must find out for example if eroticism follows paths parallel to the cognitive and social developments I have mentioned. This of course brings us back to the biological component of the biological-environmental-cognitive interaction. The relationship of developmental processes to reproduction is still a matter of speculation and little data. Our society is changing. Describing is difficult enough, but prescribing is even more onerous. I am very interested in describing. But, I do not know what to do about prescribing.

I am encouraged by the integrative theoretical work that is simultaneously emerging from gender role research achievement research (Atkinson, 1981), and moral development (Hoffman, 1980). We know a great deal more than we did when I started just over 10 years ago. Our theorizing will definitely benefit from this.

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